



March 12, 2024

To: Michigan Legislators

From: Michigan Teacher Leadership Collaborative

We are educators representing districts across Michigan and members of the Michigan Teacher Leadership Collaborative, a select group of educators co-convened by The Education Trust-Midwest and Teach Plus Michigan to strive to ensure that state policies benefit a diverse population of students. One area lacking equity and access in our state is post-secondary education. In our work, we have found that Michigan's low Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion rates indicates that students are not taking advantage of the benefits or financial resources available to them as they consider attending a post-secondary institution after graduating high school. We believe that implementing a statewide graduation rate related to FAFSA completion would ensure that all students have access to these resources, and lead to more students pursuing post-secondary options. We recommend the following:

### **Policy Goal:**

By June of 2024, the Michigan legislature will pass a bill requiring FAFSA completion as a graduation requirement, in order to promote post-secondary access to educational opportunities, and provide funding for this requirement to Michigan schools.

### **Why This Issue Is Important:**

#### **+ For Students:**

- Seniors who complete the FAFSA are 85% more likely to immediately enroll in postsecondary education ([Detroit Regional Chamber](#)).
- Students in the lowest socioeconomic quintile were associated with a 127% increase in college enrollment after high school graduation ([DRC](#)). It is an "enrollment predictor." Automatic consideration for federal, state & institutional financial aid

#### **+ For Schools:**

- Students hoping to attend college strive to perform well during high school with the incentive of receiving financial aid through FAFSA.
- Requiring FAFSA completion ensures that all students have an intentional touch point for post-graduation.
- Universal FAFSA prompts schools to set aside intentional time to discuss college affordability and postsecondary options.

#### **+ For Michigan:**

- An educated workforce would grow the state's economy and make it nationally competitive.
- Requiring universal FAFSA completion would help develop Michigan's economy and contribute to the State's sixty by 30 goal increasing the number of working Michiganders from 50.5% to 60% by 2030! ([Michigan.gov](#))

## What the Evidence Shows:

- + By June 2023, only about half (50.5%) of Michigan 12th graders had completed the FAFSA, ranking the State 31 out of 50 states and Washington, District of Columbia in FAFSA completion rates (TICAS).
- + Michigan's graduating classes of 2021 and 2022 left \$182.6 million on the table of student aid students did not know what was available to them ([NCAN](#)).
- + **"In 2022, only 47.3% of students completed the FAFSA leaving over \$93 million in available Pell Grant funds on the table ([TICAS, p.1](#))."**
- + According to Detroit College Access Network Detroit FAFSA Tracker (05/22/2023) 53% of Detroit area high schools had 50% or higher FAFSA completion rate (DCAN).

## We Recommend:

- + We support passing SB 463 which "requires prospective high school graduates to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) unless a student and their family sign a waiver acknowledging what the FAFSA is and affirming their decision to not complete it."
- + Fully fund the governor's proposed \$40 million allocation to schools for the purpose of training and rollout to aid students in FAFSA completion as presented in the FY 2025 budget.
  - o Direct these funds to community organizations (ex: MCAN, [Jobs for Michigan's Graduates](#), etc.) that will directly support students with the implementation of this graduation requirement.
- + Continue to consult teachers, school counselors, and other FAFSA specialists or post secondary experts on how to best train, implement, and fulfill FAFSA completion in their districts.

## Potential Impacts:

- + **Students and Families**
  - o Close equity gaps in college access without negatively impacting graduation rates (MCAN).
- + **Schools**
  - o Increased burden of completion, specifically on school counselors and high school educators. This will hopefully be mitigated by providing appropriate funding for this requirement.
  - o There will not be an impact on graduation rates ([Inside Higher Ed](#)).

### Michigan

- o By reducing barriers to post-secondary education, Michigan can reach 60 by Thirty and create the talented workforce that our economy demands (MCAN).

Respectfully submitted,

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